DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 305 714 EA 020 687

AUTHOR Capper, Colleen A.
TITLE Transformative Leadership: Embracing Student Diversity in Democratic Schooling.
PUB DATE Jan 89
NOTE 30p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Differences; *Democratic Values; *Disabilities; Economically Disadvantaged; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; *Individual Differences; *Leadership Responsibility; Minority Group Children; Special Education

ABSTRACT

School administrators are challenged to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse school population, including minority, poor, and disabled students. Democratic schooling holds the most promise for student diversity, but its premises are limited for students with intellectual disabilities. The special education profession has disseminated practices and strategies to help administrators integrate disabled students in school. However, viewing students with severe disabilities as special only perpetuates bias and discrimination against them. By understanding how severely disabled students can be active members of the democratic classroom, administrators can apply their awareness and knowledge to the entire range of student diversity in their schools. This paper promulgates the idea of the school administrator as a transformative, intellectual leader capable of transcending intellectual bias to the benefit of all students and staff. After differentiating the transformative intellectual from accommodating and critical/Marxist varieties, the paper discusses the need to expand the principles and practices of democratic schooling to address the range of student diversity. To meet these needs, administrators can parallel teachers' role in the areas of social empowerment, mutuality in living, ways of knowing, and the development of language. By articulating the language of possibility for even the most severely disabled students, transformative administrators make possible the inclusion and success of all other students. Included are 27 references. (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED305714

Transformative Leadership:
Embracing Student Diversity in Democratic Schooling

Colleen A. Capper

Department of Educational Administration

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Running Head: TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Colleen A. Capper

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 020687

Abstract

School administrators are faced with the challenge of an increasingly diverse school population. Democratic schooling holds the most promise for the variety of students in schools, but even its premises are limited for students with intellectual disabilities. If school administrators as transformative leaders, can articulate the langauge of possibility for students in their schools with even the most severe intellectual disabilities, then the inclusion and educational success of all other students in the school community will be possible.

Transformative Leadership:
Embracing Student Diversity in Democratic Schooling

The diversity of students in our nation's schools is continuing to grow. Nearly one-third of all school-age children are members of minority groups (American Council on Education, 1988), while approximately 20% of the student body are children living in poverty (Hodgkinson, 1988). In spite of urban growth, 67% of all schools in the United States are rural, and 35% of the student population are enrolled in these rural schools (Sher, 1988; Worthington, 1983). Integration of students with moderate and severe disabilities and the concomitant renegotiation of general and special education (Will, 1986) are resulting in a greater range of learner needs in the classroom. The number of students with diverse learning needs is continuing to increase because of lower infant mortality among babies with disabilities, and because of more unwed teenage mothers bearing premature babies at risk for educational retardation (Hodgkinson, 1988).

With the emphasis on high academic standards and accountability, and the pitting of equality against quality, the education reforms of the 80's do not hold

promise for students with intellectual disabilities (Ferguson, 1986; Lilly, 1987; Shepard, 1987). From a general education perspective, democratic schooling (Bastian, Fruchter, Cittell, Greer, & Haskins, 1986) offers potential educational equality for students with severe intellectual disabilities. The coequal goals of productive learning and mutuality in living of democratic schooling (Sarason & Doris, 1979) support active participation in the education process for all students. However, persons with severe intellectual disabilities have not been explicitly included in the range of diversity which embodies the concepts of citizenship and democracy in democratic schooling.

The special education profession has disseminated practices and strategies to be used by administrators to include students with disabilities in their schools (Biklen, 1985; Sage & Burello, 1986; CASE, 1988/89; Elliott & Riddle, 1988/89; Sage & Burello, 1986; Wilcox, Jackson, Overdorff, Flannery, 1988). However, continuing to view students with severe intellectual disabilities as "special", even in their integration into the schools, only perpetuates bias and discrimination against them. School administrators must

regard all students, even those with severe intellectual disabilities, as members of the communities of diversity in the schools. By understanding how students with severe intellectual disabilities can be active members of the democratic classroom, school administrators can apply this awareness and knowledge to the entire sphere of student diversity in their schools.

In order to manage schools with increasingly diverse populations, this paper promulgates the role of the school administrator as a transformative intellectual (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). The paper adds to the knowledge base of educational administration in two ways. First, the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals to encourage social justice has been explored (Giroux & McLaren, 1986), and this paper explicitly considers the role of the school administrator functioning in this manner as they meet the challenge of student diversity. Second, this paper describes the practice of transformative leadership which can transcend the intellectual bias in democratic schooling to the benefit of all students and staff.

To gain an understanding of the conceptual, philosophical, and theoretical foundations of the role

of the school administrator as a transformative leader, first, the critical education ideologies of neo-conservatives, radical critics, and liberal humanists will be reviewed. Second, the term intellectuals will be defined and a typology of intellectuals will be described. Next, transformative leadership will be defined as it emanates from the concept of teachers as transformative intellectuals. This discussion builds on the limited literature available on the role of school administrators in the empowerment process. Fourth, the intellectual bias inherent in current notions of citizenship and democracy is discussed. Finally, the role of school administrators as transformative leaders will be described, in terms of social empowerment which can transcend the intellectual bias in democratic schooling, and can then benefit all students.

Critical Ideologies and Intellectuals

An intellectual does not function in a societal vacuum and the role of the intellectual in education is embedded in her/his ideological perspective of education. According to Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), critics of education can be categorized as neo-conservatives, radical critics, and liberal humanists.

Neo-conservatives are perpetrators of the current educational reform movement. They call for a "back to basics" curriculum, tighter evaluation standards, and do not hesitate to sacrifice equality for quality. The neo-conservative perspective is based on human capital theory and focuses on individualism, competition, and personal effort and reward.

Radical critics have an ideology tightly linked to Marxism in that they believe schools reproduce societal inequalities. They argue that change cannot be initiated within the schools, thus they do not consider any alternatives such as school reform. For radical critics, social revolution is the only solution to educational inequities.

Liberal humanists function in accordance with progressive education. They possess both a language of possibility and a language of critique for education. They see power and knowledge in schools not only as negative forces undermining equality for students, but also consider the use of power and knowledge as a positive means to address the inequalities in education. Parallels can be drawn between the critical education

ideologies of neoconservatism, radical criticism, and liberal humanism and the function of the intellectual.

The intellectual can be characterized as ". . . someone who has a breadth of knowledge about the world, who views ideas in more than instrumental terms, and who harbors a spirit of inquiry that is critical and oppositional, one that is true to its own impulses and judgments" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 34). Aronowitz and Giroux have developed a typology of four intellectuals including accommodating, hegemonic, critical and transformative.

Accommodating intellectuals are those who support the dominant society and groups, and seek to maintain the status quo. Hegemonic intellectuals function essentially the same as accommodating intellectuals, differing in that they serve as leaders for dominant groups and classes in society. Their goal is to preserve the existing order. Accommodating and hegemonic intellectuals parallel the philosophic perspectives of neo-conservatives.

Critical intellectuals are more descriptive of the Marxist point of view, and see themselves as apolitical. Because they believe oppressive educational practices

are the result of inequalities endemic in society, they feel the only change that can happen is from the outside in terms of a social revolution. The role of critical intellectuals is similar to the ideology of radical critics.

Transformative intellectuals bring to their work both critical reflection and possibility. Giroux & McLaren (1986) define a transformative intellectual as

> . . . one who exercises forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice which attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. . . one whose intellectual practices are necessarily grounded in forms of moral and ethical discourse exhibiting a preferential concern for the suffering and struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed. . . someone capable of articulating emancipatory possibilities and working towards their realization (p. 215).

The perspective of liberal humanists corresponds to the education goals of the transformative intellectual. Although Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) advocate for

educators at all levels to be transformative intellectuals, the literature focus has been on the role of teachers.

Transformative Leadership

As transformative intellectuals, teachers act as reflective practitioners and the conceptualization, planning, and designing of instruction are not separated from the processes of implementation and execution. The classroom pedagogy of teachers as transformative intellectuals includes the following features: (a) treating students as critical agents, (b) questioning how knowledge is produced and distributed, (c) utilizing dialogue, (d) making knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory (e) making choices, (f) embodying, power, language, history, and culture in the curriculum and (g) acknowledging the primacy of student experience. The literature alludes to administrators in regards to training:

> If prospective teachers are often trained to be specialized technicians, future school administrators are trained in the image of the social science expert. . . Inherent in such training is the notion that complex language

systems, management controls, and systems of accountability are beyond the grasp of either teachers or the average layperson. The technocratic consciousness embodied in this view is not only at odds with the notion of decentralized control and the principles of participatory democracy, it also presents an ahistorical and depoliticized view of school governance and policy. Schools are not seen as sites of struggle over different orders of presentation, or as sites that embody particular configurations of power that shape and structure activities of classroom life. On the contrary, schools become reduced to the sterile logic of flow charts, a growing separation between teachers and administrators, and an increasing tendency toward bureaucratization. . . the form that school knowledge takes and the pedagogy used to legitimate it become subordinated to the principles of efficiency, hierarchy and control. One consequence is that decisions and questions over what counts as knowledge, what is worth teaching, how one judges the purpose and nature of

> instruction, how one views the role of school in society, and what the latter implies for understanding how specific social and cultural interests shape all levels of school life, is removed from the collective influence of teachers themselves. (Aronowitz, & Giroux, 1985, p. 27-28).

Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) focus on the garnering of power by administrators but they do not discuss what the role of administrators should be in this intellectual process, as illustrated in the following:

> The principles underlying management pedagogies are at odds with the notion that teachers should be actively involved in producing curricula materials suited to the cultural and social contexts in which they teach. These pedagogies ignore questions regarding cultural specificity, teacher judgment, and how student experiences and histories relate to the learning process itself. The issues embodied in such questions represent a mode of teacher autonomy and control that are a positive hinderance to those school administrators who believe that excellence is a quality displayed primarily in higher reading, math, and college

> board scores. This becomes more obvious in light of the major assumption underlying management pedagogy: that the behavior of teachers needs to be controlled and made consistent and predictable for different schools and student populations. The payoff for school systems is not merely the touting of more manageable forms of pedagogy; this type of school policy also makes for good public relations in that school administrators can provide technical solutions to the complex social, political, and economic problems that plague their schools. Simultaneously, they invoke the tenets of accountability as indicators of success. In other words, if the problem can be measured it can be solved (p.29).

Administrators as transformative leaders need to embody the principles and actions of transformative intellectuals, while at the same time, create an environment which supports the function of teachers in a similar capacity. The conditions needed to support intellectual work include time for reflection, reading, sharing work with others, and producing materials. These activities are in contrast to traditional

teachers' work which includes isolation in teaching, long hours, very little input on curriculum, and many non-curricular tasks. Transformative leaders can also parallel those actions performed by the teacher in the democratic classroom and can include (a) treating teachers as critical agents, (b) utilizing dialogue with them, and (c) supporting the primacy of the teacher experience.

The literature on democratic schooling is negligent in providing guidance concerning the roles of school administrators. Transformative leaders can parallel and support the work of teachers as transformative intellectuals. However, strictly adhering to the principles and practices of democratic schooling as outlined in the literature will not address the entire range of diversity in the schools. The voices for emancipatory schooling are inhibitive and sometimes, stunningly silent for students with severe intellectual disabilities.

Democratic Schooling and Intellectual Bias

For transformative leaders to address the range of diversity in the schools, the parameters and assumptions of democratic schooling will need to be modified to

include those with intellectual disabilities. Some of the principles of democratic schooling could remain unchanged, and be applicable for students with severe intellectual disabilities. For example, statements on the politics of difference and radical plurality are pertinent for all students regardless of intellectual functioning:

> . . . a radical language of citizenship and democracy entails a strengthening of the horizonal ties between citizen and citizen. This calls for a politics of difference in which the demands, cultures, and social relations of diverse groups are recognized as part of the discourse of radical pluralism. As a form of radical pluralism, the category of difference is not reduced to the possessive individualism of the autonomous subject at the heart of liberal ideology. Central to this form of radical pluralism is a public philosophy that recognizes the boundaries between different groups, the self and others, and at the same time creates a politics of trust and solidarity that supports a common life based on democratic principles that create the ideological and

> institutional preconditions for both diversity and the public good (Giroux, 1988, p. 31).

Some propositions of democratic schooling blatantly exclude students with any kind of disability, for example,

> At stake here is the willingness of educators at all levels of schooling to struggle collectively as transformative intellectuals, that is, as educators who have a social vision and commitment to make public schools democratic public spheres, where all children, regardless of race, class, gender, and age (emphasis added), can learn what it means to be able to participate fully in a society that affirms and sustains the principles of equality, freedom, and social justice (Giroux, 1988, p. 215).

Other precepts of democratic schooling, because of their focus on the intellect, lead one to question the role of persons with intellectual disabilities. For example, transformative intellectuals view one function of schooling as developing students to be leaders, critical thinkers, and active participants in a democratic society, and ". . . the creation of an

educated citizenry capable of exercising political and ethical leadership in the public sphere" (Giroux, 1988, p. 205). Giroux also actively promotes citizenship education for democracy and defines citizenship as ". . . an active agent in questioning, defining, and shaping ones relationship to the political sphere and the wider society" (p. 206). It is not clear whether the writers consider students with severe intellectual disabilities as active participants in their notions of citizenship participation.

Thus, the underlying premises of democratic schooling can and should include those with severe intellectual disabilities. However, statements naming diversity need to include disability, along with the other potential bias areas of gender, race, age, and class. Finally, in the practice of citizenship and democracy, transformative leaders can eliminate intellectual bias in their schools. These democratic practices not only can support full participation of students with intellectual disabilities but can also address the various learning needs of all students.

Transformative Leadership and Democratic Schooling

To meet the needs of a diverse student population, transformative leaders can parallel the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals in the two areas of social and self-empowerment. Social empowerment refers primarily to classroom pedagogy and school policy which will be the focus of this discussion. Self-empowerment completes the idea that work in schools is linked to society, and refers to the participation of school personnel in community groups that support societal justice. While self-empowerment is no less an important concept, the primary focus of this paper is on the school and classroom activities for social empowerment which can address the entire range of student diversity.

Social Empowerment

The actions of teachers and administrators as transformative intellectuals can be broadened to encompass three dimensions which transcend intellectual bias in democratic schooling: (a) the reinforcement of mutuality in living, (b) the appreciation of alternative ways of knowing, and (c) the encouragement of language development as a means of student power.

Mutuality in living. Productive learning and mutuality in living are the co-equal goals of democratic schooling. If we believe, as Sarason and Doris (1979) contend, that schooling is not a dress rehearsal for life, but that schooling is life itself with all its problems and complexities, then students with intellectual disabilities need to be present in the general education classroom. Students and teachers cannot decide how they want to live together in the classroom if some members of the school community are absent. Therefore, separate schools, segregated classrooms, and "pull out" programs for students with intellectual disabilities are not compatible with democratic schooling. Students should attend the school and classroom they would attend if they were not intellectually disabled, to enable the school community to fully practice mutuality in living.

However, merely being present in the classroom is not enough. Isolation and inequalities can persist even when the child is no longer physically separated from his/her peers. Active participation and interaction as a citizen in the democratic classroom should be expected of all students. The research and literature on social

interaction among students with and without disabilities will need to inform this student interaction (Bednersh & Peck, 1986; Cole, Meyer, Vandercook, & McQuarter, 1987). Mutuality in living is dependent on the transformative leader appreciating alternative ways of knowing and encouraging the development of language.

Ways of knowing. Democratic schooling emphasizes the importance of students knowing and naming their history and culture, and the primacy of student experience to inform classroom pedagogy (see Wigginton, 1985). Giroux and McLaren (1986) note,

> . . . this presupposes that teachers [and administrators] familiarize themselves with the culture, economy, and historical traditions that belong to the surrounding community. In other words, teachers [and administrators] must assume a pedagogical responsibility for attempting to understand the relationships and forces that influence their students outside of the immediate context of the classroom. This responsibility requires teachers [and administrators] to develop their curricula and pedagogical practices around those community traditions, histories, and forms

> of knowledge that are often ignored within the dominant school culture. This can, of course, lead to a deeper understanding on the part of both teachers and students of how both "local" and "official" knowledges get produced, sustained, and legitimated (p. 236).

Traditional, formal ways of knowing, prevalent in the neoconservative schools of today, deny the history of the oppressed. Feminist (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) and international cultural scholarship (Cushner, 1988) are beginning to make in-roads into the traditional Western curriculum. Persons with disabilities and their advocates are also beginning to claim their own history (Gregornik, 1989; Human Policy Press, 1986). However, the student with severe intellectual disabilities cannot verbally articulate that history. It is important that school personnel know the history of handicapism and the institutional apartheid of persons with disabilities. It is also necessary to know the individual student's educational and social background, and discern how to sensitively share that information with the school community.

For the students who cannot verbally articulate their life experiences, how do administrators and teachers know what these students know? Reinforcing mutuality in living and appreciating alternative ways of knowing are inextricably intertwined with the ability of the student to communicate.

The development of language. A third central premise of democratic schooling which includes students with intellectual disabilities is the primacy of language and communication. The body of knowledge developed by researchers and scholars in the area of language development for persons with disabilities (Dunst, 1985; Schiefelbusch, 1979) will need to be tapped to support this effort. Transformative leaders and teachers will need to be receptive and open to communicative intent which goes beyond verbal articulation, and for students with profound intellectual disabilities, extends beyond a formal augmentative system. An eye gaze, head turn, facial expression, body position, and vocal utterance have meaning, and for the student with severe intellectual disabilities, all constitute their language. Using their language for choicemaking skills in the classroom will return power back to students with

intellectual disabilities. Mutuality in living, ways of knowing, and the development of language constitute the core principles of transformative leadership which can transcend all biases in the schools.

Conclusion

Student diversity in our schools reflects our diverse society which encompasses race, class, gender, age, and disability. Neoconservative education reforms promoted by accommodating and hegemonic intellectuals exacerbate reaching the goal of educational equality for students with diverse learning needs. Democratic schooling, supported by liberal humanists holds the most promise for the variety of students in schools, but even its premises are limiting for students with intellectual disabilities. If school administrators, as transformative leaders, can articulate the language of possibility for students in their schools with even the most severe intellectual disabilities, then the inclusion and educational success of all other students in the school community will be possible.

Transformative leadership within the ideology of liberal humanism is not just an option, but a prerequisite for successfully meeting the needs of our

diverse student population. And, as transformative leaders,

> . . . schools need to be defended as an important public service that educates [all] students to be critical citizens who can think, challenge, take risks, and believe that their actions will make a difference in the larger society. This means that public schools should become places that provide the opportunity for [all] students to share their experiences, to work in social relations that emphasize care and concern for others, and to be introduced to forms of knowledge that provide them with the conviction and opportunity to fight for a quality of life in which <u>all</u> (emphasis added) human beings benefit" (Giroux, 1985, p. 214).

References

American Council on Education (1988). One-Third of a Nation. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Aronowitz, S. & Giroux, H. (1985). Education Under Seige: The Conservative, Liberal, and Radical Debate Over Schooling. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.

Bastian, A., Fruchter, N., Cittell, M., Greer, C., & Haskins, K. (1986) Choosing Equality: The Case for Democratic Schooling. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Bednersh, F. & Peck, C. E. (1986). Assessing social environments: Effects of peer characteristics on the social behavior of children with severe handicaps. Child Study Journal, 16(4), 315-329.

Belenky, M. F., Clinch, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind. NY: Basic Books.

Biklen, D. P. (1985). Achieving the Complete School. New York: Teachers College Press.

Cole, D. A., Meyer, L. H., Vandercook, T., & McQuarter, R. J. (1987). Interactions between peers with and without severe handicaps: The dynamics of teacher intervention. Unpublished manuscript, University of Minnesota: Duluth, MN.

Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc. (1988/89). Principal Instructional Leadership and Supervisory Practices in Special Education Programs. Indiana University, Bloomington: Author.

Cushner, K. (1988). Achieving intercultural effectiveness: Current knowledge, goals, and practices. Education and Urban Society, 20(2), 159-176.

Dunst, C. J. (1985). Communicative competence and deficits: Effects on early social interactions. In E. McDonald & D. Gallagher (Eds.). Facilitating Social-Development in the Young Multiply Handicapped child (pp. 93-140). Philadelphia: HMS Press.

Elliott, B. & Riddle, M. (1988/89). An Effective Interface Between Regular and Special Education: A Synopsis of Issues and Successful Practices. Indiana University, Bloomington: Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc.

Ferguson, D. L. (1986). Severity of need and educational excellence: Public school reform and students with disabilities. Unpublished manuscript. University of Oregon, Eugene.

Giroux, H. A. (1988). Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Giroux, H. A. & McLaren, P. (1986). Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. Harvard Educational Review, 56(3), 213-238.

Greenburg, D. E. (1986). A special educator's perspective on interfacing special and general education: A review for administrators. Reston, VA: ERIC Clearing House for Handicapped and Gifted Children, Council for Exceptional Children, 1986. (An ERIC Exceptional Child Education Report)

Gregornik, B. (1989). My Life Story [Video]. Chicago, IL: Little City Foundation.

Hodgkinson, H. L. (1988). Facing the future: Demographics and statistics to manage today's schools for tomorrow's children. The School Administrator, 8(45), 25-31.

Human Policy Press (1986). Our Voice is New: All About Self-Advocacy [Slides]. Syracuse, NY: Author.

Lilly, M. S. (1987). Lack of focus on special education in literature on educational reform. Exceptional Children, 53(4), 325-326.

Sage, D. D. & Burrello, L. (1986). Policy and Management in Special Education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

Schiefelbusch, R. L. (1979) (Ed.) Nonspeech Language and Communication. Baltimore: University Park Press.

Shepard, L. A. (1987). The new push for excellence: Widening the schism between regular and special education. Exceptional Children, 53(4), 327-329.

Sher, J. (1988). Why rural education has not received its "fair share" of funding--and what to do about it. Journal of Rural and Small Schools, 2(2), 31-37.

Wigginton, E. (1985). Sometimes a Shining Moment: The Foxfire Experience. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Wilcox, B., Jackson, C., Overdorff, C., & Flannery, B. (1988). Effective Schools and Implications for Programs Serving High School Students with Moderate and Severe Handicaps: A Primer for Principals. Indiana University, Bloomington: Council of Administrators of Special Education.

Will, M. C. (1986). Educating children with learning problems: A shared responsibility. Exceptional Children, 46, 411-413.

Worthington, R. M. (1983, October). A rural education policy for the 80's. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Rural Education Association, Manhattan, KS.